



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Kentucky Earth Day Awards Presented During Annual Event *Awards applaud environmental stewardship*

Frankfort, Ky. (April 13, 2012) – The Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission today presented its annual Earth Day awards to individuals and groups who have made significant contributions to the environment.

This year's ceremony took place at Berry Hill Mansion in Frankfort, and Kentucky native and author Bobbie Ann Mason was keynote speaker.

During her remarks, Mason challenged Kentuckians to change their "habit of mind" and to avoid being a throw-away society. "Small acts can add up to a habit of mind. Wastefulness carries with it a suggestion of a lack of awareness; if someone is wasteful, surely they're not thinking about what they are doing. Think about what you are doing. Be aware of what you are consuming: where does it come from and what was the cost?"

"If we want to stop being a throw-away culture and start saving our natural resources, each of us must figure out how to confront each and every plastic spoon and foam burger box that enters our lots," Mason said.

Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Len Peters helped present today's awards, saying that the Commonwealth is a special place. "I'm not a Kentucky native, but Kentucky is my home. Having lived in other places I certainly have an appreciation for our state's special beauty. All of today's Earth Day awardees share this appreciation—it's evident in the types of activities they conduct every day to help preserve this special beauty, and to ensure that all Kentuckians live in a healthy environment."

The 2012 Earth Day Award recipients are:

City of Greenville – Residents of Greenville wanted to preserve the only wooded parcel in the city's business district so they turned it into a 12-acre park. The park, now known as the

Brizendine Brothers Nature Park thanks to a private donor, provides walking and jogging trails, a pond, a stream, an outdoor classroom and a preserve for wildlife habitat. Grant dollars provided signage for tree identification, wooden bridges, fencing and bird feeders.

John Gagel is a sustainability manager at Lexmark International Inc. In his spare time, he likes to protect watersheds and participate in reforestation. One such project was to clean up Cane Run Creek, which runs through Lexmark's Shadybrook Park. The waterway had been placed on Kentucky's list of impaired streams due to invasive honeysuckle and accumulated waste. He persuaded colleagues to clean up the stream and plant native species along its banks. The clean-up is now an annual event.

Larry Griffin, International Paper Inc., Henderson Mill – The Henderson Mill employs 85 people and manufactures 100 percent recycled containerboard for corrugated boxes. The company has made great strides in energy conservation and stewardship initiatives and Larry Griffin, environmental manager, leads the way. Since 1996, the mill has diverted 2.6 million tons of discarded boxes from landfills and made the solid waste into containerboard for new corrugated boxes. By installing new water filtration systems, the mill has reduced consumption of fresh water by 400,000 gallons a day. The plant's dedication to energy reduction has resulted in a 50 percent drop in gas and electricity needed to produce a ton of containerboard over a 10-year span. This also reduces the mill's carbon footprint. The company developed an environmental kiosk at John James Audubon State Park in Henderson in collaboration with park staff. The kiosk describes plant and animal life found in the park, and gives guidance on "leave no trace" principles.

Richardsville Elementary School, Warren County – Kentucky claims the nation's first public school designed to be net zero. Richardsville Elementary School in Bowling Green was designed to consume a minimal amount of energy and sell its extra to the Tennessee Valley Authority. Unique design features include solar panels that produce 2,500 kilowatt hours of electricity on a sunny day, enough to energize 50 homes; clerestory windows that bounce sunlight onto curved ceilings to flood classrooms with natural light, and a geothermal heating and cooling system. Richardsville's ingenuity has dramatically reduced its carbon footprint. The district chose to turn it into an energy museum and living classroom for students.

Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) – Established by the Kentucky General Assembly in 1912 to protect forests from wildfire and depletion from over-harvesting, the KDF is celebrating a century of service to Kentucky citizens. The Division of Forestry provides protection from wildfire; technical aid to public and private landowners about invasive insects, disease and invasive plants; two nurseries that grow native tree seedlings for reforestation; an urban forestry program to address the importance of urban trees for social, environmental and economic benefits; and a forest health program to assess issues with insects, disease and invasive plants. KDF also manages 10 state forests using best management practices and a Master logger curriculum to train, license and regulate master loggers to ensure high water quality. Programs such as Smokey Bear fire prevention, Arbor Day in Kentucky, reforestation projects, Project Learning Tree, Forestry in the Classroom and Kentucky Firewise continue to provide Kentuckians with information regarding the importance of forestry to the state's environmental and economic health.

American Synthetic Rubber Co. manufactures synthetic rubber for the tire industry. It has made significant improvements in reducing waste to the landfill and reducing air emissions from its processes. The manufacturer recycles or reuses more than 98 percent of its waste. A 55-acre

landfill owned by American Synthetic Rubber Co. that was in close proximity to the Ohio River was closed. Partnering with Waste Management Inc., who added an additional 20 acres, the plant developed a Certified Wildlife Habitat there as specified by the Wildlife Habitat Council. It was certified in 2009 and recertified in 2011. American Synthetic Rubber Co. employees also helped plant native trees and wildflowers and install and maintain two honeybee hives.

Robert and Adriana Lynch of Whitley County operate a farm that is respectful of the environment. They do so by employing best practices such as riparian buffers, fencing off forests from livestock, improving and protecting water sources, and planting trees and grasses that prevent erosion. The couple planted 4,000 hardwood trees on their property and “honey bee” trees that are friendly to pollinators. In an effort to boost the bee population, they gave seedlings away to encourage other property owners in Whitley County. Because of the environmental benefits that bees provide, this measure improves crop health for neighbors in Corbin and beyond. They open their farm for tours, estimating hosting 2,000 guests over the years. Whenever challenges arise on the farm, such as wind and pond damage or the emergence of the Georgia Pine Beetle, the family draws on technical aid available to pursue solutions that are environmentally friendly.

Marshall County Conservation District has promoted Earth Day for the past five years by providing free seedlings, energy saving light bulbs for those who sign energy conservation pledges, and e-scape recycling, collaborating with the Marshall County Refuse coordinator. Along with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, the district participates in local recycling. Paper, plastic and cardboard pickups are collected weekly. The district also provides landowners with dead animal disposal through a grant from the Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and assists landowners with the agriculture water quality plans throughout the year. In partnership with Marshall County Fiscal Court, the district is assisting with best management practices at Mike Miller Park. Other projects include the annual Agricultural Day for fourth graders; developing a nature trail surrounding Lakeland Wesley Village; providing Enviroscape and River Table educational models for use in schools; and help with tree identification and land markers.

The EQC also presented this year's **Lifetime Achievement Award** to **Dean and Nina Cornett** of Letcher County. The couple has a long list of environmental achievements to their credit. They cleaned up a one-acre dump and turned it into a park, and chaired clean-up efforts to remove 100 tons of trash. They arranged for students from Berea College, the University of North Carolina and Duke University to bring water systems to Letcher County to restore wells and planted trees along the railroad to help filter coal dust from railcars. As filmmakers, they have educated thousands about bears, chestnut trees, sustainable living practices, timber theft and the Kenai, Alaskan Peninsula. As grant writers, they have helped their elderly neighbors replace a failed septic system that was polluting the North Fork of the Kentucky River. The Cornetts' generosity and work extend beyond the borders of the Commonwealth. They live in Kentucky in the winter and Alaska in the summer. In Alaska, they work to protect Coho Salmon and reduce logging in federal forests.

The Public Service Award was presented to the **Floyd County Conservation District**. Serving residents of Floyd County since 1950, the Floyd County Conservation District employs two full-time employees who address not only the environmental education needs of the county, but provide technical expertise to local groups and landowners to implement best management

practices. The district conducts workshops on various topics including ginseng and hay production and has given out several thousand tree seedlings. These efforts promote the district's goals of erosion prevention, the restoration of wildlife habitat and providing programming that is specific to rural populations and crops. The district also serves as a work-based learning location for the Carl D. Perkins Job Corps Center. Students from throughout the United States have an opportunity to earn credit in their vocational studies, which enables them to better understand environmental and agriculture issues. The district also provides assistance to the Elkhorn Environmental Education Park.

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